

Ibn Ajiba's commentary on

Surah Al-Fatiha

(Quran 1:1–7)

Seeking Refuge with Allah from the Accursed Satan

As for the seeking of refuge by saying ‘I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan,’ it is a recommended Sunnah before reciting the Quran, due to His statement, Exalted is He: ‘So when you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan’ [Al-Nahl: 98]. The meaning of seeking refuge is turning to Allah, Exalted is He, for protection from the evil of Satan and his whisperings that divert the servant from understanding the Quran and reflecting upon it. The ‘accursed Satan’ is the one rejected by the curse, far from Allah’s mercy, who embellishes disobedience for the servant and distances him from obedience. In the seeking of refuge, there is a Sufi indication that the servant should strip himself of the desires of the self and the whisperings of Satan, so his heart becomes pure to receive the lights of the Quran, and he becomes fully turned to Allah with his entirety, holding fast to His firm rope.

Verse 1:

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, this verse is the first that was revealed of the Quran, according to one opinion, and it is the key to every good and blessing, because it contains the greatest name of Allah, which is the source of every favor and grace. It has been said that ‘In the name of Allah’ means ‘by the permission of Allah’ or ‘by the assistance of Allah,’ and ‘Allah’ is the comprehensive name for all divine attributes, and ‘the Most Gracious’ indicates the general mercy that encompasses the believer and the disbeliever, and ‘the Most Merciful’ indicates the specific mercy for the believers. In the Basmala, there is a Sufi indication that the servant cannot act except by the assistance of Allah and His facilitation, for every movement and stillness of the servant is only by the power of Allah and His will.

Verse 2:

All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds

All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds, ‘praise’ is the giving of thanks to Allah for all His apparent and hidden favors, and it is the first thing with which the servant opens his speech because He is most deserving of praise due to the perfection of His essence and attributes. ‘Lord of the worlds’ means their Creator and Sustainer with His favors, and ‘worlds’ is the plural of world, which is everything other than Allah from the creations, including humans, jinn, angels, and others. In it is an indication that praise is for Allah in every state, because He is the Lord of everything, so praise is not valid for other than Him. In the esoteric sense, there is an indication that the heart should be attached to Allah alone, witnessing His beauty and perfection.

Verse 3:

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, a repetition to emphasize the attribute of mercy. ‘The Most Gracious’ is the One who bestows great, general favors that encompass everyone, and ‘the Most Merciful’ is the One who bestows specific favors that are particular to the believers in the Hereafter. In it is an indication that the servant should turn to Allah with hope and desire for His mercy, because His mercy encompasses everything. In the esoteric sense, there is an indication that divine mercy manifests in the hearts through guidance and facilitation.

Verse 4:

Master of the Day of Judgment

Master of the Day of Judgment, meaning the Owner of the Day of Recompense and Accounting, which is the Day of Resurrection when the complete dominion of Allah and His overpowering authority appear, so there is no owner except Him and no judge other than Him. In it is a reminder for the servant of fear of the Day of Accounting and hope in Allah’s pardon. In the esoteric sense, there is an indication that the dominion of the Truth manifests in purified hearts, so the servant becomes a witness to Allah’s dominion in everything.

Verse 5:

You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help

You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help, this verse expresses the sincerity of worship for Allah alone, so we worship none but Him, and we seek help from none but Him in all our affairs. Worship is humility and submission to Allah by doing what He commanded and avoiding what He prohibited. Seeking help is requesting assistance from Allah in religious and worldly matters. In it is a Sufi indication that the servant should be in a state of annihilation from himself, relying on Allah in every matter, witnessing his own incapacity and the power of his Lord.

Verse 6:

Guide us to the straight path

Guide us to the straight path, it is a supplication from the servant to Allah to guide him to the straight path, which is the path of Islam that leads to Allah’s pleasure and His paradise. The straight path is the clear path with no crookedness in it, and it is the path of truth and justice. In it is an indication that guidance is from Allah alone, and that the servant is in need of it at all times. In the esoteric sense, there is an indication of seeking the guidance of the heart to the knowledge of Allah and the witnessing of His beauty.

Verse 7:

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned anger, nor of those who are astray

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned anger, nor of those who are astray, ‘those upon whom You have bestowed favor’ are the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, whom Allah guided to His path and favored with the blessing of faith and guidance. ‘Those who have earned anger’ are those who knew the truth and disobeyed it, like the Jews, and ‘those who are astray’ are those who were ignorant of the truth and wandered from it, like the Christians. In it is an indication that guidance is following the path of the people of favor and avoiding the path of the people of anger and misguidance. In the esoteric sense, there is an indication that the straight path is the path of love and knowledge, and that the servant asks Allah to establish him on this path.

Saying “Amin” After Surah Al-Fatiha

As for saying ‘Amin’ after Al-Fatiha, it is a recommended Sunnah in prayer and outside of it, due to what was narrated from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, that he said: ‘When the imam says, “nor of those who are astray,” then say “Amin,”’ for indeed the angels say “Amin,” and Allah responds to whoever says “Amin.”’ And ‘Amin’ is not part of the Quran, but it is a supplication meaning: ‘O Allah, accept,’ or "Grant our supplication." In it is a Sufi indication that the servant seeks steadfastness in supplication and sincerity in it, because ‘Amin’ emphasizes the hope for the acceptance of the supplication contained in Al-Fatiha.